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APPLICATION NUMBER: *60/458,001*
FILING DATE: *March 27, 2003*
RELATED PCT APPLICATION NUMBER: *PCT/US04/09429*

By Authority of the
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03-28-03

Express Mail No.: EL 500 578 999 US

COVER SHEET FOR PROVISIONAL APPLICATION FOR PATENT

Hon. Commissioner for Patents
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Sir:

This is a request for filing a PROVISIONAL APPLICATION under 37 CFR 1.53(c).

Docket Number	7115-0042-888	Type a plus sign (+) inside this box	+

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TITLE OF INVENTION (280 characters max.)

A PACKAGING DEVICE

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ENCLOSED APPLICATION PARTS *(check all that apply)*

☒ Specifications	*Number of pages*	10		Applicant claims small entity status, see 37 CFR § 1.27.
☒ Drawing(s)	*Number of sheets*	3 (Figs. 1-4)	☐	Other (specify)

METHOD OF PAYMENT *(check one)*

☐ A check of money order is enclosed to cover the Provisional filing fees.	ESTIMATED PROVISIONAL FILING FEE AMOUNT	☒ $160
☒ The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge the required filing fee to Deposit Account Number 16-1150.		☐ $80

The invention was made by an agency of the United States Government or under a contract with an agency of the United States Government.
☒ No ☐ Yes, the name of the U.S. Government agency and the Government contract number are:

Respectfully submitted,

Signature [signature]

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REGISTRATION NO. *(if appropriate)* 35,340 Date March 27, 2003

☐ Additional inventors are being named on separately numbered sheets attached hereto.

Total number of cover sheet pages 1

PROVISIONAL APPLICATION FILING ONLY

NY2: 1416320.1

A PACKAGING DEVICE

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to a packaging device. In particular, the present invention relates to a packaging device for protecting its contents during shipping and storage but further is suitable for display for retail purchases, and more specifically is adapted for packaging bedding articles, other fabrics, or like products. More particularly the present invention relates to a packaging device, which allows a customer to access the enclosed article at the retail end without removing the same from the packaging device.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Conventional packages, such as bedding packages, are typically in the form a bag, pouch, box, or carton having an opening to allow the manufacture or the user to insert or remove the contents. Once the contents of the packages is inserted, the opening can be closed, for example, with a closure member, such as a zipper, or in a more permanent fashion, for example by heat sealing, so that the articles contained in the packages can be protected during transportation and storage. The packages are normally maintained in such a closed state at least until they are distributed to the retail stores and put on the shelves for sale. The packages, in addition to protecting the contents, may display or provide a promotional function for the contents, or both.

Before potential customers purchase packaged articles, the customers typically will want to open the packages to inspect and feel the enclosed articles. If the packages do not provide a resealable opening, the potential customers may break the packages, which will prevent the contents from being inserted back into the packaging for further protection. Alternatively, if the packages are provided with a resealable opening which is usually sufficiently large to allow the entire article to pass therethrough, the customers have a tendency to remove at least a portion of the article from the packages for close inspection. Often times, customers fail to return the articles to their initial packaging state as designed or intended by the manufacturer. Also, the customers may forget to close the fasteners after inspecting the packaged articles.

In such cases, the aesthetic appearance of the packages or the articles can be significantly undermined, which can in turn adversely affect the sales of the merchandise.

Moreover, if the packages are left open for a prolonged time, the enclosed articles can fall out of the bag, or otherwise be soiled or damaged. Consequently, additional maintenance of the merchandise is required. Otherwise, the merchandise must be sold at a discounted price because it can no longer provide the purchasers with the quality intended by the manufacturer.

The present invention provides a packaging device that overcomes the above problems. The present invention is capable of affording satisfactory protection of the packaged article at the retail end and providing a mechanism that allows the customer to access the packaged article without opening the packaging device or shifting the article enclosed therein.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A packaging device is provided which in one embodiment can comprise a casing member adapted to form a compartment for containing and surrounding an article therein. The casing member can define an opening portion for the article to pass therethrough when being inserted into or removed from the compartment and an access port in communication with the compartment. The opening portion can be selectively closed by a closure member to maintain the article enclosed in the casing member. In one embodiment, the access port can be sized to prevent the enclosed article from being removed therefrom during normal use.

In a non-trial mode of the packaging device, the access port is closed so that the article can be completely covered and enclosed in the casing member when the closure member closes the opening portion. In a trial mode of the packaging device, the access port is opened by the user to reach the article contained in the compartment.

The casing member surrounding or forming the access port can be made of a flexible material. Additionally or alternatively, the casing member surrounding the access port can be at least partially reinforced. In one embodiment, at least a portion of the casing member is made of transparent material.

An alternative embodiment of the packaging device is provided which can comprise a casing member adapted to enclose and surround an interior chamber for containing at least one article and an access mechanism formed in the casing member. The access mechanism can be selectively operable by a user to move between a first position which forms an

opening communicating with the interior chamber and a second position which prevents communication with the interior chamber. Additionally or alternatively, the access mechanism is sized and configured to allow a user to access and feel the at least one article and prevent the user from removing the at least one article from the packaging device.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The detailed description of the present invention will be better understood in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein like reference numbers and reference characters represent like elements, as follows:

Fig. 1 shows a first embodiment of a packaging device formed in accordance with the present invention;

Fig. 2 shows the front view of the packaging device as shown in Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 shows the front view of an alternative packaging device; and

Fig. 4 shows the sections forming the front wall of the packaging device as shown in Fig. 3.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Exemplary packaging devices are shown throughout the drawings. In the following description of various embodiments of packaging devices, similar elements or components thereof are designated with same reference numbers or reference characters and redundant description is omitted. It should be understood that the exemplary packaging devices shown in the figures are not to be considered limiting and various features from the different embodiments may be considered.

Fig. 1 shows an exemplary packaging device 1. The packaging device 1 can comprise a bag 10 formed by a casing member 20, which will be described in detail below. While the packaging device 1 is described as comprising a bag 10, it should be understood that it can alternatively be referred to as a pouch, box, carton, or by similar terms. The bag 10 can comprise an opening portion 30, which is adapted to allow one or more articles 2 to be placed therein or removed therefrom, as will be described in detail below. The bag 10 can have various shapes and sizes depending on the nature, volume, quantity, and the like of the packaged article 2.

In one embodiment, the bag or pouch 10 can have a general three-dimensional shape. In an exemplary embodiment, such as shown in Fig. 1, the bag 10 can have a three-dimensional rectangular shape having front and rear walls 12 and 14 and four side walls 16. Such a rectangular bag 10 can be used for various articles 2, which has or can be manipulated into a generally rectangular shape, such as bedding products, various fabrics, or the like products. In another exemplary embodiment, a rectangular shaped bag 10 can have the dimensions of about 12 inch x 15 inch x 2 inch. Additionally or alternatively, the shape of the bag 10 can also be designed to provide an aesthetic quality to appeal to the purchasers. For example, the bag 10 can have a cylindrical shape with circular ends. It will be appreciated that other shapes of the bag 10 are also within the scope of the invention.

The bag 10 or casing member 20 can be formed in various manners. In one embodiment, the bag 10 can be formed with a front wall 12 and a rear or back wall 14 with one or more side walls 16 located between the front and rear walls 12 and 14. The front, rear, and side walls 12, 14, and 16 can define a compartment or interior chamber 22 therein for receiving the article 2. In one exemplary embodiment, the front, rear, and side walls 12, 14, and 16 can be separately formed and joined together forming one or more joining edges 18, such as for example by heat sealing, heat welding, bonding, gluing, or other well know joining processes. In an exemplary embodiment, one or more of the edges 18 between the adjoining walls can be reinforced, for example to provide additional strength to the packaging device 1. In another exemplary embodiment, one or more side walls 16 can be integrally formed with each other, and alternatively or additionally with the front and rear walls 12 and 14. Optionally, the integrally formed walls can be subject to creasing or folding processes. In one exemplary embodiment, one or more pieces or sections of material, such as A, B, and C as shown in Fig. 4, can be provided to form any one of the front, rear, and side walls 12, 14, and 16. It will be appreciated that other embodiments of forming the bag 10 are also within the scope of the invention.

The casing member 20 can be adapted to form a compartment or a cavity 22 for containing a packaging article 2 therein. The casing member 20 can be formed of various materials as appropriate for packaging the article 2. For example, at least a portion of the casing member 20 can be made of transparent material so that at least a portion of the enclosed article 2 can be viewed without opening the bag 10. In an exemplary embodiment, the casing member 20 can be at least partially, or entirely, made of a flexible material. In another exemplary embodiment, the casing member 20 can comprise combinations of

relatively stiff and more flexible materials. In a further exemplary embodiment, the casing member 20 can be at least partially, or entirely, made of a deformable material.

In one embodiment, such as shown in Fig. 1, the opening portion 30 in the casing member 20 can allow the entire article 2 to pass therethrough when being inserted into or removed from the bag 10. The opening portion 30 can be formed in various conventional manners. In one embodiment where the bag 10 has a three-dimensional shape, the opening portion 30 can be formed on at least one of the side walls 16, such as along a major dimension thereof. Preferably, the opening portion 30 extends along approximately 50% of the side walls 16, such as shown in Fig. 1. In an exemplary embodiment, the opening portion 30 can extend along adjacent side walls 16, such as shown in Fig. 1. In another exemplary embodiment, the opening portion 30 can be formed along at least one edge 18 of the side walls 16. In an exemplary embodiment, the opening portion 30 can be formed in three side walls 16, preferably adjacent to or at the edges 18 of the side walls 16 where they meet with the front or rear walls 12, 14, so that the entire front and/or rear wall 12, 14 can flip open to provide access to the article 2 contained in the bag 10. It will be appreciated that other embodiments of the opening portion 30 are also within the scope of the invention.

In another embodiment, such as shown in Fig. 1, a closure member 40, preferably a resealable closure member, can be provided to selectively open and/or close the opening portion 30 to maintain the article 2 enclosed in the casing member 20. Various conventional fasteners can be used to serve such a purpose. In an exemplary embodiment, such as shown in Fig. 1, a zipper element 42 can be fixed to the casing member 20 along the portion defining the opening portion 30 to thereby selectively open and/or close the opening portion 30. In another exemplary embodiment, the zipper element 42 can extend along at least one edge 18 formed by a side wall 16 and the adjoining front wall(s) 12 or rear wall(s) 14 of the packaging device 1. When the zipper element 42 is open, the enclosed article 2 can be removed from the packaging device 1. Preferably, the closure member 40 extends along at least approximately 50% of the side walls 16, such as shown in Fig. 1, or more preferably approximately 75-85% of the side walls 16. In an exemplary embodiment, the closure member 40 can extend along three side walls 16 of a rectangular shaped packaging device 1. It will be appreciated that other embodiments of the closure member 40 are also within the scope of the invention.

The packaging device 1 can comprise an access port 50, such as shown in Figs. 1 to 3. Preferably, the access port 50 can be configured to allow a user to reach into the

compartment 22 and access and feel the article 2 contained therein, even when the opening portion 30 is sealed, for example by the closure member 40. In other words, the access port 50 can provide the customer with independent access to the enclosed article 2 separately from that provided by the opening portion 30. Additionally or alternatively, the access port 50 can be configured to prevent the enclosed article 2 from being removed therefrom during normal use. In one embodiment, the access port 50 is capable of moving between a trial mode and a non-trial or rest mode. For example, in a trial mode, the access port 50 can be opened by a potential purchaser to reach into the compartment 22 and access and feel the article 2 contained therein. In an exemplary embodiment, the access port 50 will remain open without further effort on the account of the potential purchaser, so that the article 2 contained in the compartment 22 can be accessed and felt by the potential purchasers. In another exemplary embodiment, the access port 50 can be formed so that, in a non-trial or rest mode, it remains closed. The access port 50 can further be formed so that optionally it will self close unless a potential purchaser forces the access port 50 to open. Preferably, the article 2 can be completely covered by the casing member 20 not withstanding the existence of the access port 50 unless the closure member 40 is opened by a user.

The access port 50 can be formed in various manners. In one embodiment, the access port 50 can be formed by partially overlapping a plurality of wall sections, such as sections A, B, and C, of the casing member 20. In an exemplary embodiment, such as shown in Figs. 1 and 2, the front wall 12 can comprise two sections A and B. A portion of the two sections A and B can freely overlap with each other. When the packaging device 1 is filled with the article 2, the overlapping portions can be biased against each other to thus close the access port 50 and cover the enclosed article 2. When a user wants to access to the enclosed article 2, the user can easily apply a gentle force separating the two overlapped portions and reach into the compartment 22. The two wall sections A and B when separated to open the access port 50 can form a sleeve like opening that communicates within the compartment or interior chamber 22. Preferably wall sections A and B are formed of a flexible material, preferably a material that allows the two overlapping sections to be easily separated. In an exemplary embodiment, at least a portion of the casing member 20 surrounding the access port is at least partially reinforced. In another exemplary embodiment, a reinforced portion 24 can be formed by a folded edge 26, such as shown in Fig. 1. In a further exemplary embodiment, the folded edge 26 can have a length in the range of about 5 inches to about 7 inches, and preferably of about 6 inches.

In another embodiment, the access port 50 can be formed as a slit portion defined in one of the front, rear, and side walls 12, 14, and 16 of the packaging device 1. In an exemplary embodiment, such as shown in Figs. 3 and 4, the slit portion 50 can be formed by partially overlapping a plurality of wall sections, such as sections A, B, and C. The slit portion 50 can be easily separated by the user to thereby access the enclosed article 2.

The dimension of the access port 50 can vary as desired. In one embodiment, the access port 50 can be sized to prevent the enclosed article 2 from being removed therefrom during normal use. Depending on the size of the entire packaging device 1, the access port 50 can have such a dimension that a user can extend one or more fingers or one hand therethrough to access and feel the enclosed article 2. Accordingly, the enclosed article 2 can be securely retained in the packaging device 1 and be protected from undesired shifting inside or removal from the bag 10. In an exemplary embodiment, the access port 50 can be a small portion of the entire packaging device 1.

The access port 50 can be provided at various locations on the packaging device 1. In an exemplary embodiment, the access port 50 can be positioned on the front wall 12 of the bag 10. Because packages are normally displayed on the shelves with their front sides facing toward the customers, such a location can make the packaged article 2 ready for inspection without further manipulating the packages. In another exemplary embodiment, such as shown in Figs. 1 and 2, the access port 50 can be formed at a bottom corner of the packaging device 1 and extend diagonally across the front wall 12. The edge 26 in Fig. 1 preferably, and in exemplary fashion, about 4 to 8 inches, more preferably about 5 to 7 inches and most preferred about 6 inches. It will be appreciated that other embodiments of the access port 50 are also within the scope of the invention.

A preferred embodiment comprises a resealable opening portion 30 formed in one or more side walls 16, and preferably including at least 50% of the side walls 16 of the rectangular shaped packaging device 1 while an access port 50 is formed in a different wall such as the front wall 12 and is formed of two overlapping sections which form the front wall 12. More preferably the access port 50 is formed in a corner of the front wall 12 and is sized to allow the typically sized hand of a person to be inserted into the access port 50 and into the compartment 22 of the packaging device 1. Even more preferred, the access port 50 is located on the front wall 12 and extends diagonally from a first side wall to a second side wall, and further preferably extends from the first side wall to the second side wall in a location where the opening portion 30 in the side wall(s) is not located.

It will be appreciated that the various features described herein may be used singly or in any combination thereof. Therefore, the present invention is not limited to only the embodiments specifically described herein. While the foregoing description and drawings represent a preferred embodiment of the present invention, it will be understood that various additions, modifications, and substitutions may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention as defined in the accompanying claims. In particular, it will be clear to those skilled in the art that the present invention may be embodied in other specific forms, structures, arrangements, proportions, and with other elements, materials, and components, without departing from the spirit or essential characteristics thereof. One skilled in the art will appreciate that the invention may be used with many modifications of structure, arrangement, proportions, materials, and components and otherwise, used in the practice of the invention, which are particularly adapted to specific environments and operative requirements without departing from the principles of the present invention. The presently disclosed embodiment is therefore to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive, the scope of the invention being indicated by the appended claims, and not limited to the foregoing description.

CLAIMS

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A packaging device comprising:

a casing member adapted to form a compartment for containing and surrounding an article therein, the casing member defining an opening portion for the article to pass therethrough when being inserted into or removed from the compartment; and

a closure member for selectively closing the opening portion to maintain the article enclosed in the casing member;

wherein the casing member further defines an access port which communicates with the compartment.

2. The packaging device of claim 1, wherein:

in a non-trial mode, the access port is closed so that the article can be completely covered and enclosed in the casing member when the closure member closes the opening portion; and

in a trial mode, the access port is opened by the user to reach the article contained in the compartment.

3. The packaging device of claim 1, wherein the access port is sized to prevent the enclosed article from being removed therefrom during normal use.

4. The packaging device of claim 1, wherein the casing member surrounding the access port is made of a flexible material.

5. The packaging device of claim 1, wherein the casing member surrounding the access port is at least partially reinforced.

6. The packaging device of claim 1, wherein at least a portion of the casing member is made of transparent material.

7. A packaging device comprising:

a casing member adapted to enclose and surround an interior chamber for containing at least one article; and

an access mechanism formed in the casing member selectively operable by a user to move between a first position which forms an opening communicating with the interior chamber and a second position which prevents communication with the interior chamber.

8. The packaging device of claim 7, wherein the access mechanism is sized and configured to allow a user to access and feel the at least one article and prevent the user from removing the at least one article from the packaging device.

9. A packaging device comprising:

a casing member adapted to enclose and surround an interior chamber for containing at least one article; and

an access mechanism formed in the casing member, the access mechanism being sized and configured to allow a user to access and feel the at least one article and prevent the user from removing the at least one article from the packaging device.

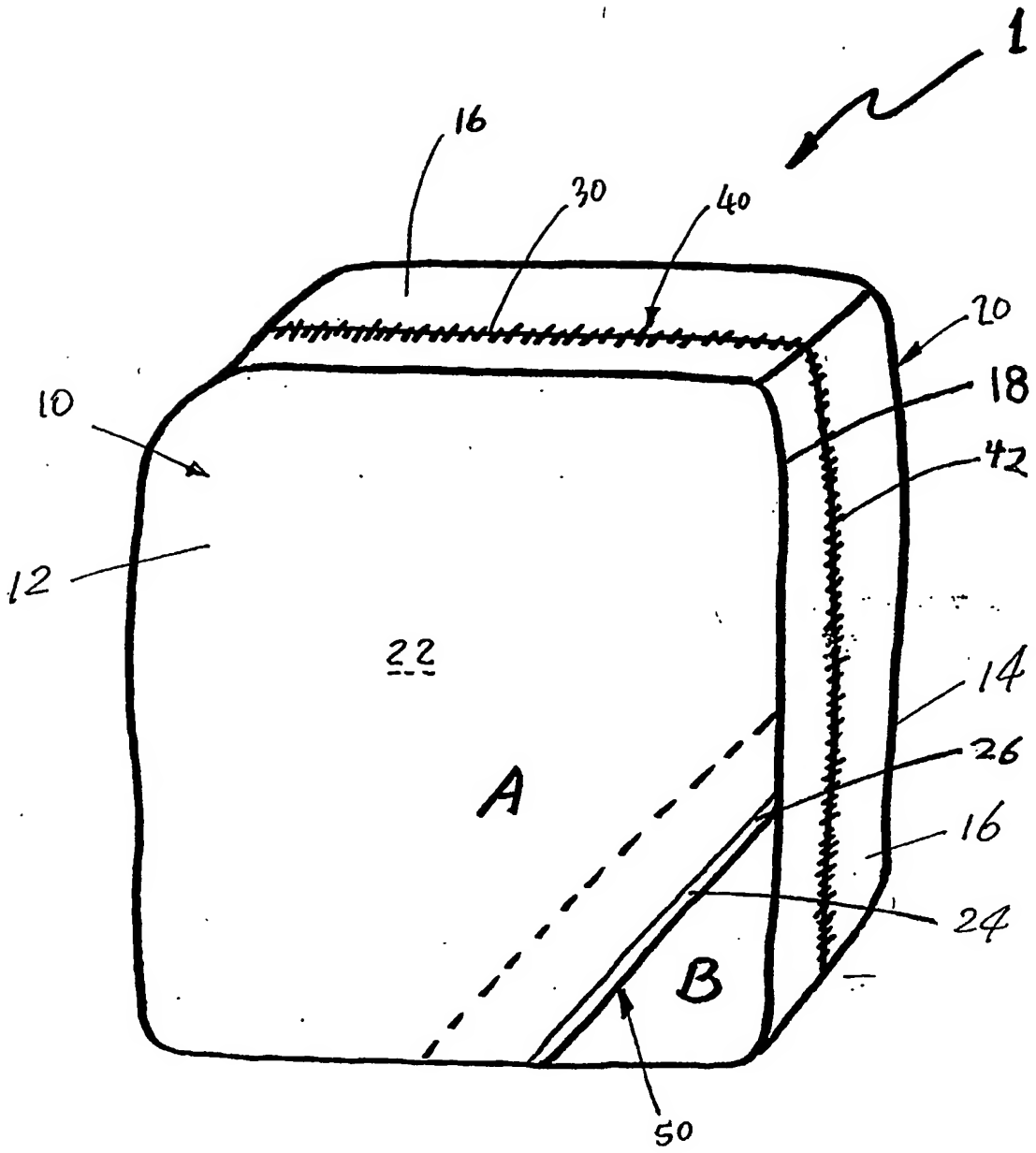


Fig. 1

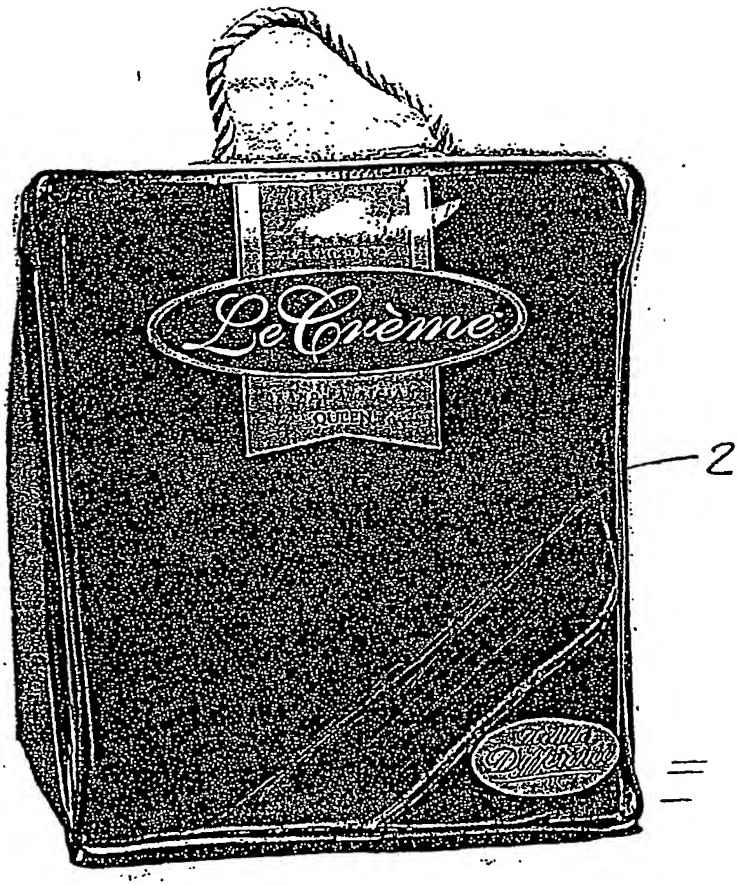
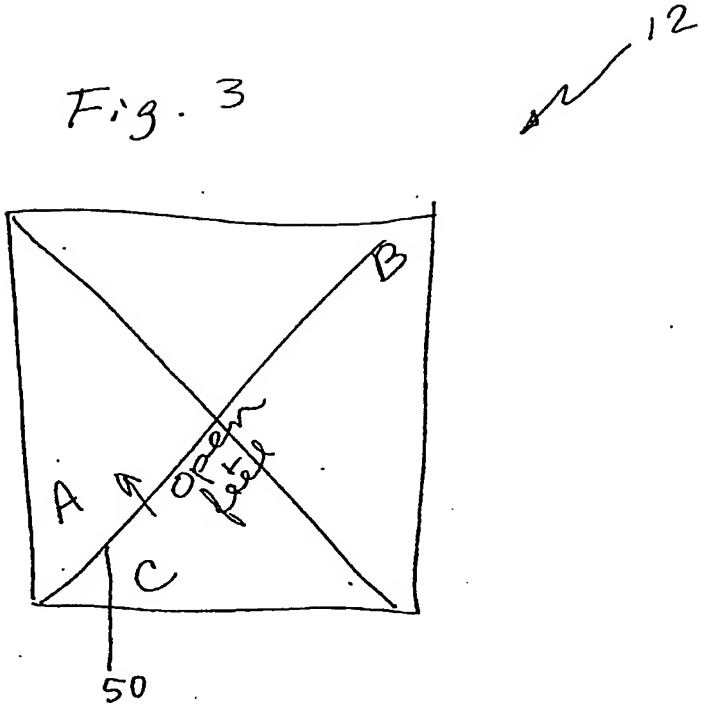


Fig. 2

Fig. 3



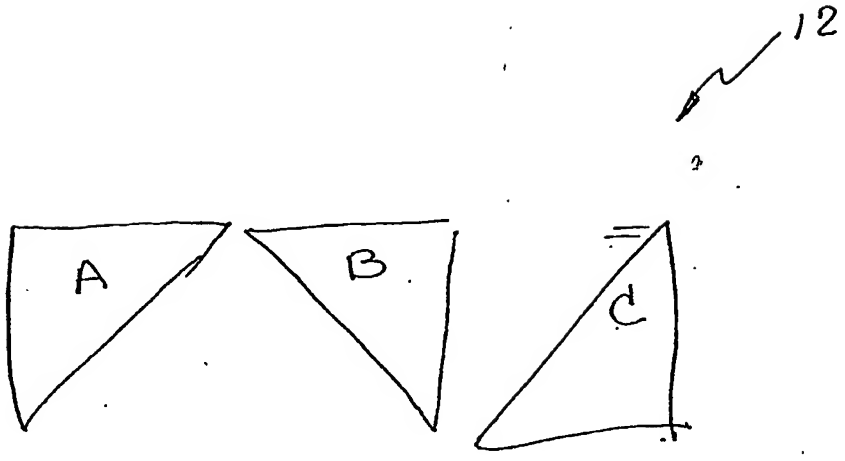


Fig. 4